Testimony Opposed to SB-1085 and HB-7371: Acts Concerning the Creation of a Retail Marijuana Market in Connecticut

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The Marijuana Market Agenda is full of myths and lies. The truth is that tax revenues from this market will not rebuild our roads and bridges, that arrest and incarceration rates will not magically occur at racially-proportionate rates, and that marijuana is not a harmless, safe drug. These are the lies that are being told to you, and all you have to do is look at the states where this has been legalized and see that their empty promises from Big Marijuana were not fulfilled.

The messages being pushed by the Marijuana Industry are not harmless misunderstandings. They are extremely dangerous lies. I am someone who has been deeply affected by these lies: they helped kill my brother-in-law.

My husband's brother, Johnny, was one of the 1,018 people killed by drugs in Connecticut in 2018.[i] Johnny died on April 26, 2018, at the age of 24, from fentanyl. After five-plus years of struggling with drug addiction, my husband lost his brother, my mother and father-in-law, their son, and my baby, his uncle. Johnny was an incredibly beautiful, loving, and creative person and I miss him every day. He was amazing.

Most of the conversation around the Opioid Crisis would like to have you believe the blame for this epidemic lies squarely on the shoulders of Big Pharma. That is another lie.

I have no reason to believe Johnny ever took a prescribed opiate medication. In fact, the whole reason he starting using drugs in the first place was because he considered it a "safe, natural alternative" to the pills he could get from a doctor. Like many drug addicts, Johnny struggled with depression and anxiety. He self-medicated with marijuana, believing the lie that it is safer than medications his insurance would cover, and he became addicted. Next, he tried other drugs, eventually took heroin, and was killed by fentanyl.

As you know, Connecticut has seventh-highest opioid overdose death rate in the country, at 25 deaths per 100,000 people. The national rate is 15 deaths per 100,000 people.[ii] Some say marijuana legalization will save us from opioids. This is not true.

- According to a study published in 2017, Americans who reported using marijuana in the past year were 2.6 times more likely to misuse opioids.[iii]
- The National Survey on Drug Use and Health (2013 & 2014) found that 92% of heroin users first used marijuana in previous years. This is nearly twice the rate of heroin users who started with painkillers in past years (47%).[iv]
- The majority of studies find that marijuana users are often polysubstance users, despite a few studies finding limited evidence that some people substitute marijuana for opiate medication. The National Academy of Sciences report found that "with regard to opioids, cannabis use predicted continued opioid prescriptions 1 year after injury.... Finally, cannabis use was associated with reduced odds of achieving abstinence from alcohol, cocaine, or polysubstance use...."[v]

Since the beginning of his drug addiction, I have heard people repeatedly assert that marijuana holds the key to solving the Opioid Crisis. If only they knew that marijuana is what started it all for Johnny. Please vote against marijuana legalization and retail sales in Connecticut. We should be doing everything we can to educate the public on the danger of this psychoactive and addictive drug, not normalizing and increasing access to it.

[i] https://data.ct.gov/Health-and-Human-Services/Accidental-Drug-Related-Deaths-2012-2018/ecj5-r2i9
[ii] https://www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/opioid-overdose-death-rates/
[iii] https://www.drugabuse.gov/news-events/news-releases/2017/09/marijuana-use-associated-increased-risk-prescription-opioid-misuse-use-disorders
[iv] https://learnaboutsam.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/27Sep2017-opioids-one-pager.pdf
[v] 2017 NAS Report. https://learnaboutsam.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/27Sep2017-opioids-one-pager.pdf